

Acquisition Workforce

FALL 2002

Business Professionals Meeting Tomorrow's Challenges

This Newsletter is for you, the Acquisition Professional. The first in a series of quarterly issues, the Acquisition Workforce Newsletter will address issues of importance to your career, personal growth, education, and business acumen, the "HOT" issues in procurement, and a little bit of comic relief for fun. Enjoy!

Mathematics Refresher:

How are your math skills? Are you trying to prepare yourself for the Contract Cost and Pricing classes? Or just want to see if you remember the curriculum from your High School/College days. Then try this offer from George Mason University offered through Defense Acquisition University. It is an interactive training module refresher for basic mathematics or probability and statistics. It defines learning objectives, and teaching points, and then you take it from there by following their "subway" system. Please check it out at the following:

<http://cne.gmu.edu/modules/dau>

Learn about functions and derivatives, moving averages, and regression analysis.

Taken from the Acquisition **Leadership Effectiveness** **Inventory:**

- 1. Assess Your Competencies**
- 2. Set Your Goals**
- 3. Plan for Action**

Today, acquisition exists in an ever-changing environment and demands continuous attention to personal growth and development. While not everyone will become a team leader, supervisor, manager, or executive, everyone can benefit from management and leadership competencies in order to adapt to new challenges and assume new roles.

One of the competencies of Acquisition Leadership Effectiveness is "Continual Learning," grasping the essence of new information; mastering new technical and business knowledge; recognizing one's own strengths and weaknesses; pursuing self-development; seeking feedback from others and, opportunities to master knowledge.

To find out more, please visit:

<http://alei.doddacm.com>

Contracting/Purchasing Profile

This section is dedicated to the individual. Each issue will profile at least one Contracting/Purchasing professional. It may be someone new to the organization. It may be someone from another agency. It may be someone you know. If you are interested in being profiled here, or you have a story to tell, please contact the editor at daroberts@ars.usda.gov

Patrick Reilly

Patrick Reilly is a 2002 addition to the Contracts Branch, Procurement and Property Division, ARS Headquarters. Receiving a BS Degree in Business Administration from Bowie State University, Bowie, MD, Patrick accepted an upward mobility Contract Specialist position in February 2002.

Patrick came to ARS from private industry where he worked as a Draught Product Manager for an Anheuser/Busch Wholesaler. His work involved many procurement/contracting activities, including participation in competitive negotiations. With a company cell phone and pager on his hip, Patrick typically put in at least 50 hours per week, and worked many

weekends at high profile events. One of Patrick's memorable experiences is being the lead for his product at the last three Presidential Inaugural Balls.

Patrick describes his experience in private industry. Beer is a product whose success is determined a lot by "the look." Point of sale and image are critical in competition for visibility and differentiation. In coming to the government, Patrick hopes to achieve a lot of diversity - he describes each requirement as unique; as the contracts change, so does the work. Patrick sees opportunities down the road as the workforce retires and new talent is required to replace exiting personnel. Competitive sourcing initiatives also offer new challenges as government personnel prepare themselves for potential A-76 studies.



Isn't acquisition great? We have learned things that have made us better/wiser consumers in our professional and personal lives. If someone is late delivering one of our purchases, we ask for consideration. We negotiate better deals on our vehicle purchases. We look at products and services and decide if the prices are fair and reasonable. People will comment to us, "What are you, a lawyer, or something?!" While this newsletter is not recommending purchasing specific products, it will make you aware of web-sites or products we come across that might prove valuable in your careers or private lives.

Stephen Cohen has been described as a master negotiator. A graduate of Columbia Law School and Brandeis University, Mr. Cohen received formal training in Negotiation, Advanced Negotiation, and Mediation at Harvard Law School. Mr. Cohen now serves as President of The Negotiation Skills Co., whose web presence can be found at <http://www.negotiationskills.com/>. The site content includes enjoyable articles on negotiation including, "Negotiation Phobia," "Negotiating on the Telephone," "How Many Negotiators Does It Take to Screw in a Lightbulb," and "Heal Thyself First." In the latter article, negotiation is illustrated as two sisters fighting over an orange. Each sister wants the orange; one wants it to eat, and the other wants the rind to cook with. Their interests have nothing in common, but each can get exactly what is wanted.



Customer Service: It's everything!

One Sweet Protest

Hershey Foods historically supplied chocolate rations to U.S. soldiers. Working with the U.S. Quartermaster General, Hershey developed a Field Ration D, a nutritious candy bar containing an astounding 600 calories. By the end of World War II, Hershey had supplied more than one billion rations to U.S. soldiers.

During 1990, Hershey developed a candy-bar, code-named "Desert Bar", which could withstand temperatures up to 140 degrees (...it melts in your mouth, not in the sands...). Meanwhile, Mars, their biggest competitor, was already shipping candy bars to the Gulf War troops.

(cont.)

In 1991, the Pentagon issued a solicitation for 6.9 million non-melting candy bars, and Mars was eventually awarded a contract. Within ten days, Hershey filed a protest with the General Accounting Office (GAO), citing the inferior quality of the Mars product. The GAO ultimately denied the protest. An agency lawyer remembers the Hershey complaint as very woeful; one could almost equate it to an issue of national security or the selling of military secrets!! (Information taken from *"The Chocolate Wars,"* by Joel Brenner, *Reader's Digest*, February 1999)

Top Resume Mistakes

1. Lack of Specifics
2. Attempting One Size Fits All
3. Highlighting Duties Instead of Accomplishments
4. Going on too Long or Cutting Things too Short
5. A Bad Objective
6. No Action Verbs
7. Leaving Off Important Information
8. Visually too Busy
9. Incorrect Contact Information

Brought to you by MasterTRAK

Four Innocent Ways to Say, "I'm Unprofessional"

1. Using a Cutesy Email Address for Correspondence

Example: cutiepie@domain.com or studmuffin@domain.com

You might think this is cute, clever, or memorable. An employer will probably think otherwise.

2. Putting a Silly Message on Your Answering Machine

Example: "A is for academics, B is for beer - and one of those reasons is why I'm not here. Please leave a message, okay?"

You might think you are being funny, but an employer will probably think hiring you is risky.

3. Sending Your Resume and Cover Letter Without Proofreading

Your resume and cover letters are the only tools a potential employer has to judge your abilities. Make any opinions positive.

4. Winging Your Interviews Instead of Preparing Thoroughly

Don't depend on being able to think on your feet. You should make the effort to find out everything you can about an organization. After all, why would you want to work in a place you know nothing about?

Brought to you by MonsterTRAK

You have a presentation to give. Remember, **nervousness is a choice!** You can focus on the message you are going to deliver and the people who will benefit, or you can focus on yourself. The choice is **yours!**

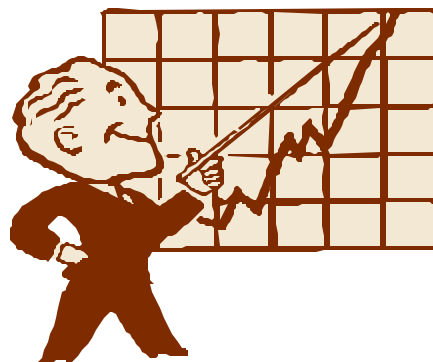
Have you considered Toastmasters International?

According to Toastmasters, here's how to make effective presentations:

1. Know the room. Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
2. Know the audience. Greet some of the audience as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.
3. Know your material. If you're not familiar with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech and revise it if necessary.
4. Relax. Ease tension by doing exercise.
5. Visualize yourself giving your speech. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear, and assured. When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful.
6. Realize that people want you to succeed. Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative, and entertaining. They don't want you to fail.

7. Don't apologize. If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they hadn't noticed. Keep silent.
8. Concentrate on the message – not the medium. Focus your attention away from your own anxieties, and outwardly toward your message and your audience. Your nervousness will dissipate.
9. Turn nervousness into positive energy. Harness your nervous energy and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.
10. Gain experience. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking.

Toastmaster's clubs meet in more than 50 countries worldwide. Find out more at <http://www.toastmasters.org>



And now for some AGRICULTURE humor:



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(CORN Y JOKE)

WHERE IN FEDERAL CONTRACTING????

There is a great web-site available for your research use. It is called "Where in Federal Contracting." You can find it at www.wifcon.com. It contains court decisions listed according to Federal Acquisition Regulation references. For instance, if you look under FAR 6.303 Justifications, you will find the results of case B-282843, where the courts sustained a protest because the JOFOC did not demonstrate urgent and compelling circumstances, other than that attributed to lack of advance procurement planning.

In addition, you can keep up -to-date on where Agriculture's fiscal year 2003 budget stands. For instance, the House committee voted and approved recommendations on 7/11/02, and the Senate committee voted and approved recommendations on 7/25/02. An assortment of data can be garnered from this record, to include projected budgets and committee recommendations on those budgets.

The committee approved a Departmental Administration (including HRD and Procurement) funding hit and an increase over the projected budget for Salaries and Expenses. These are just a couple of the tidbits available at this site.



Get Ready: Here Comes IAS

USDA spends more than \$2 billion on goods and services every year, representing nearly 3 million transactions. Nine agencies and two administrative offices have full procurement authority for these transactions. Having employed more than 40 different systems to perform procurement functions, the Integrated Acquisition System (IAS) offers a streamlined and standardized contract management system that will reduce USDA's procurement costs, and will also allow for real-time data capture and reporting, and support a more efficient Department-wide planning and budgeting process.

The IAS pilot solution was rolled out to Rural Development and Food and Nutrition Services in August of this year. The IAS Newsletter reports 60 pilot users in six different locations were successfully trained. If you'd like to see what the product looks like, please visit the IAS Training Web-site at www.hillread.com/ias

It is reported work has begun on the IAS/FFIS interface design, a requirement that will support Agriculture's goal for commitment accounting, ensuring accurate reporting and reconciliation of transactions.

Once IAS is fully implemented, all USDA acquisition data will be accessible through a single, web-based, centralized database, allowing for real-time reporting and analysis. Online attachment of documents, automated tracking, online approval routing...the list goes on.

Seen on an office wall:

**Everyone Brings
Happiness to this
Office: Some when
they enter, others
when they leave...**



***Catching the Energy and
Releasing the Potential:
ARS/AFM is Going Fishing***

Have you had the opportunity to read the book, Fish!, by Stephen C. Lundin, Ph.D., Harry Paul, and John Christensen? With a cover that is reminiscent of Dr. Seuss's One Fish,

Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish, the book takes you into a fictional office setting that is in the process of implementing the lessons learned from the very real Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market. It talks about drawing on the energy within individuals to boost morale, improve results, and transform the workplace. Throughout the book is the underlying theme "**There is always a choice about the way you do your work, even if there is not a choice about the work itself.**"

All personnel in ARS/AFM will be participating in "FISH CAMP," where the principles of this remarkable book are reinforced through group participation and facilitated learning discussions and exercises. The Procurement and Property Division is going fishing in October 2002!!



e-Learning goes on-line
www.golearn.gov



HOT off the press!
Just opened July 23 - in response to the President's Management Agenda, this on-line e-Learning site offers a myriad of electronic classes and books to advance your personal and professional

knowledge. Check out the broad general topics from which you can select a number of classes, all of them FREE:

- ✚ Communication
- ✚ Customer Service
- ✚ e-Learning
- ✚ Human Resources
- ✚ Leadership
- ✚ Legislatively-mandated & Agency-requested Topics
- ✚ Management
- ✚ Microsoft Office 2000
- ✚ Personal Development
- ✚ Professional Development
- ✚ Project Management

And then there are over 50 electronic books! Brought to you by e-Learning Initiative Partners GSA, OPM, Transportation, Defense, and Treasury, this site supports the future of learning for tomorrow's workforce, anytime, anywhere.

Remember when you were a child and your parents read to you to put you to sleep?

Please remember this the next time you're giving a briefing or speech!!!

When your values are clear, your decision-making is easy.

Walt Disney

IDEAS

Do you have any ideas for future issues of this newsletter? Among others, there are ideas for:

- ✚ A Commercial Marketplace Corner
- ✚ Additional HOT Topics (i.e., A76)
- ✚ Problem Resolution Feature (i.e., SF-279 issues)
- ✚ Maintenance Training, when and why
- ✚ Human Interests
- ✚ New Procedures
- ✚ Recent GAO Decisions
- ✚ Your personal profile
- ✚ Great web-sites

I'm Listening! Please drop me an e-mail and let me know:

daroberts@ars.usda.gov



Letter from the Editor

I just wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself-my name is Denise Roberts, and I am a Procurement Analyst with the Policy Branch, Procurement and Property Division, ARS. A recent addition to this staff, I was thrilled to be given responsibility for Acquisition Workforce issues. While we have traditionally underestimated the importance of educating and training our workforce, viewing training as an expense, vice a tool vital to the continued success of our organizations, changes in our career qualifications have reinforced the importance of continued education and training. I hope this newsletter will assist you in your career growth and pursuit of opportunity.

I also hope you have enjoyed this first issue of the Acquisition Workforce Newsletter, and have taken away some value from its content, if only in a smile. I have had a lot of fun writing it! Let's face it, so much of what we are required to read is dreadfully boring; I hope this newsletter will at least keep you awake!

Novelist Graham Green observed, "there are moments in history when a door opens and lets the future in." For the acquisition community, the door has opened and the future is here. Acquisition reform and innovations through technology have created an

ever-changing environment for the purchasing or contracting professional. With the advent of the President's Management Objectives, the thrust of government moves towards accountability, business sense, and cultural change. What all of this ultimately means for us is yet to be determined, but you can bet there will be opportunities available for those who choose to recognize them and grab on for the ride. One of my favorite phrases is "Get on the steamroller, or become part of the road." Maybe this phrase has application here – make sure your training is current and applicable so you are ready for what is thrown your way.

Happy Contracting!! Denise

When you shoot for the
moon and come up
short, you still end up
among the stars.

(Les Brown)

